

MINUTES

NEIGHBORHOOD AND PUBLIC SAFETY ISSUES COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 15, 1995

CALL TO ORDER

The Neighborhood and Public Safety Issues Committee was called to order by Chairperson Steinberg at 7:00 p.m. on the above date at City Hall Council Chambers, 915 I Street, 2nd Floor, Sacramento, California.

ROLL CALL

Present: Councilmembers Fargo, Kerth, Waters, Steinberg

Deployment Strategies for the Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS): Phase I Grant Program (D-All)

RECOMMENDATION OF STAFF: ADOPT STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Darrell Steinberg, Chair of the Neighborhood and Public Safety Issues Committee, welcomed all present to the first of five meetings of this committee. He hopes that all participants agree that: 1. Under the leadership of the Chief of Police, the police department is improving the public safety. With enough resources they will be able to achieve their goals of making all neighborhoods safe. 2. The City and the police department have much work to do in order to achieve public safety. Over the next few weeks the committee will examine how the police department can move forward to improve public safety. He then gave an overview of the meeting topics and explained that this committee is not empowered to discuss budget issues.

Arturo Venegas, Jr., Chief of Police, advised that the monies from the Crime Bill had been appropriated and any tweaking that was occurring in Washington, DC, would have no impact on the police department. The only changes that could occur would be whether the money is issued in block grants to cities and counties or block grants to the state. Chief Venegas discussed the deployment issue and how it came about. Referring to a map, he indicated where current Neighborhood Police Officer (NPO) programs are in place and where future sites would be located. His goal city-wide is to have 100 NPOs, but 23 is a start in the right direction.

Officer Harold Bickel, NPO Officer, gave an overview of his role as an NPO. Explained the relationship that has developed with the community by involving them in the problem-solving process. Officer Bickel cited statistics indicating that violent crime has decreased 25% since 1991 when first assigned to this area.

Chief Venegas stated that the relationship extends to all of the officers working the neighborhoods or the problem-oriented police assignments. During the last six months some changes have been made: 1. The NPOs respond to calls for service when on duty in their area. This allows the beat officer who works that district time to respond elsewhere. 2. During the last two weeks of training, the recruits will be working with officers assigned to the NPO project. This will enable them to have a working knowledge of the resources available and the relationship of other agencies that work with the NPOs. 3. A POP training program has been instituted

Albert Najera, Deputy Chief of Police, explained the following process was used to determine the 13 sites for NPOs: 1. Met with area captains and asked them to meet with lieutenants, sergeants, and patrol officers to discuss where the problem areas were and who would be impacted by NPOs 2.

Examined the strategic plan. 3. Listened to complaints from councilmembers regarding crime in their districts. 4. Received input from community groups. 5. Compiled statistical information from our computerized system. All this information was combined and taken back to patrol to confirm the selections, which they did.

Chief Venegas stated that this is the end of their presentation and recommends that the committee approve the site selections.

Councilmember Fargo talked about the tremendous changes that have occurred in the communities that she represents that have NPOs. However, physical changes and social services must also be provided to improve life in these communities. Also, there is a displacement of crime into the surrounding areas. She asked whether these are the most needy neighborhoods, and how will the NPOs operate in the larger areas.

Chief Venegas recognized the fact that some of the areas were large in size, but consideration must be taken into the density of the population, level of organization exhibited within the neighborhoods, and the problems due to the nature of the area. The police department is trying to involve the district officers in this relationship with the NPOs so that both would be visible and work in tandem.

Councilmember Fargo questioned how the NPOs arrive at the same level of intimacy in the larger areas that they have in the smaller areas.

Chief Venegas stated that it is much harder, but the larger areas also have identifiable associations and leadership that they will work with.

Councilmember Fargo asked if the NPOs have a support group to share information on how they approach different matters.

Chief Venegas stated that information is exchanged on a regular basis. He also stated that is one of the purposes of the recruits training with the NPOs during their last two weeks in the academy.

Councilmember Kerth expressed concern regarding the objective criteria for the site selections.

Deputy Chief Najera explained that a number of issues were considered: density of criminal activity, calls for service information including manhours spent in particular locations, and priority of calls.

Chief Venegas stated that another factor that was considered was the commitment the police department has to the business districts and corridors to prevent crime in their areas.

Councilmember Kerth asked if in terms of preventing current crime, the police department will assign these police officers to areas that have the highest demand for crime prevention.

Deputy Chief Najera stated that the police department is using subjective and objective measures in these areas to place officers where they can best be utilized. This information is received from line officers through upper management.

Councilmember Kerth stated that this seems to be a "spoil" system and asked how the police department can come up with something that is more justifiable.

Chief Venegas advised that the technology that the police department currently has is very outdated and is not capable of providing a scientific model for assignment of NPOs. He suggested that the troops in the field and the neighbors in the areas have a very good idea of where the problems are.

Councilmember Kerth asked how the police department could get away from the "strong survive" mentality and have an objective criteria.

Chief Venegas explained that the objective criteria needs to come from a new computer system, but even with that, some information would not be captured because it is not reported.

Councilmember Kerth stated that he wants a more objective definition as to how the site selections were made. He also has concerns that NPOs funded through redevelopment funds will no longer be available for those areas when the funding period ends.

Chief Venegas explained that the funds for NPOs will be available through this calendar year. He stated that the funds from the COPS Grant will also come to an end at some point. At that time, the funding for these officers will become a policy question of the Council. He added that the police department staff will continue seeking additional outside funding. Chief Venegas indicated that the number of patrol officers needs to be increased as well, and the council and management team will need to make that decision.

Chairperson Steinberg stated that one of the time blocks of this committee will deal with the long-term public safety funding.

Councilmember Kerth is not concerned so much with the current funding, but how the decision was made as to where the officers will be assigned. If the money is cut back, how will the decision be made to assign officers?

Chief Venegas answered that some of them are defined by the SHRA contract, some are designated by project locations.

Councilmember Kerth asked for a clarification of the definition for calls for services.

Chief Venegas explained that when the Communications Center receives a call and action is taken by the police department to respond for assistance, that generates an incident report as a call for service. The Communications Center also receives calls that are more of an information referral call. That would not be registered as a call for service.

Councilmember Kerth asked whether a call to the Communications Center reporting someone sleeping in their car in a park and no officer responds would be registered as a call for service.

Deputy Chief Najera explained different ways in which the call could be handled and different ways the information could be extracted from the system.

Councilmember Kerth would like Deputy Chief Najera to prepare a report of what was included in the statistical figures that the police department presented. He then gave a scenario where a constituent had called in about an incident, and then when meeting with an area captain, noticed that the call was not on the printout. This person felt that the police department did not carry out the call.

Councilmember Waters said that he voted "No" to fund because he feels that more patrol officers are needed than NPOs, and has reservations as to how these officers will be funded. He has noticed displacement into Greenhaven/Pocket area due to the NPO programs in adjoining areas. This has increased the crime and violence in this area greatly. He commended the NPOs working the New Helvetia/Seavey Circle area, but has concerns about what the NPO assigned to Greenhaven/Pocket will do. As a citizen, he would rather see a patrol officer patrolling and answering calls for service. Councilmember Waters asked Chief Venegas if NPOs answer calls for service.

Chief Venegas responded that the NPOs are part of the sequence for calls for service in their area.

Councilmember Waters gave an example of a family dispute and asked if the call would be held until a patrol car clears, or would an NPO handle the call.

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Chief Venegas assured Councilmember Waters that the officers are very diligent and respond to calls when they are not involved in another activity.

Councilmember Waters would like to see the statistical number of calls on 15th and Broadway that were answered and handled by NPOs; not just family disputes, but calls that would normally be put out to patrol officers. He would also like stats on how many calls NPOs answered when there were no patrol cars available. Councilmember Waters has received complaints from citizens about never getting a car to respond to a call.

Chief Venegas explained that the current NPOs are contracted by SHRA and assigned to specific areas. As policy they have been included in the calls for service sequence in their areas.

Councilmember Waters asked if these 23 officers would not need to be backfilled by patrol officers.

Chief Venegas stated that was correct. He further explained to Councilmember Water's original question regarding response, that there is now more latitude in placing NPOs in the sequence of calls. They have a greater area in which to respond to calls. Currently, the officers are restricted geographically.

Chairperson Steinberg requested the following reportbacks:

- Relationship of patrol and NPOs
- Whether or not there has been an ease in the burden of patrol because of the NPOs response to calls in the NPO areas

He then invited those present to speak to the committee on their views regarding the deployment issue.

Jim Jorgensen, SPOA President, spoke in support of the deployment plan. He urged the committee to recommend the full Council adopt this plan. He stated that a political intrusion should not be made in the deployment of NPOs or any other police officers.

Councilmember Waters stated that it is presumptive that they would interject a political agenda into this process. He does not want this board or any group out there believing that we are going to interfere with the Chief's decision.

Councilmember Kerth added that his position is defending the rights of the people who elected him, not as a member of the City staff, but to watch out for the needs of these people. He would like to fully understand the assignment of a very scarce resource and make sure there was not some political assignment. Other departments would not be allowed to proceed with projects without input.

Jim Jorgensen stated that he did not think now was the time to look into this matter after the time the Chief had put into the process.

Councilmember Kerth said that it is their job to assure that this was done objectively with established criteria and uniformly applied throughout the City.

Pam Tuss, South Natomas Area, and Kate Nicholls, President of the Natomas Association, spoke in support of the deployment plan. The Committee was given statistics received from Lisa Caldarelli, Police Department, regarding calls for service and officer-initiated calls in the proposed NPO areas.

Bob Slobe, President of the North Sacramento Chamber of Commerce and a resident of Woodlake, spoke of the changes in his neighborhood from being relatively safe to having one of the highest crime rates in the city. He agreed with the deployment plan, although he would like to see more than what is being proposed in his neighborhood.

Le Dam, President of Sacramento Coalition, gave high regards to work that has been accomplished through the Stockton Boulevard Center. She would like to see three officers at that site, with at least one from the Southeast Asian community to bridge the gaps in language and cultural differences.

Chairperson Steinberg would like a reportback on the outreach efforts to employ Southeast Asian officers for that area.

Chief Venegas responded that there are five Southeast Asian officers in the academy and the police department is working with the Southeast Asian community to recruit more.

Tom O'Neil, lives in East Sacramento and a member of the Ad Hoc Community Public Safety Committee, spoke of his concerns with long-term financing and would like this committee to examine long-term solutions to budget problems the police department is experiencing. He agreed with the SPOA that first and foremost the number of patrol officers is inadequate. Mr. O'Neil suggested examining the police department's budget, strategies, and deployment of all officers. He was also concerned with the resolution process and a problem that occurred during the amending of a resolution during a Council meeting. Finally, he stated that he accepted the Chief's deployment plan and encouraged all neighborhoods to also accept it.

Councilmember Fargo asked Mr. O'Neil about clarification on the resolution matter.

Tom O'Neil stated that there were three drafts of the resolution as a result of the Council hearings.

Chairperson Steinberg clarified the resolution matter stating that the Council approved accepting the NPOs, but not the civilianization portion of the resolution.

Steven Lemmon, Chairman of North Sacramento Redevelopment PAC, spoke of his concern about the selection process for the deployment plan. He stated that the POP efforts are an improvement and feels that follow through is necessary, but is not sure that it is the NPO project.

Chairperson Steinberg, stated that the Council has approved accepting the 23 police officers. The direction has been set, but this does not mean that down the line that direction cannot be changed.

Suying Cantrelle, owner of a supermarket at Stockton Boulevard and Lemmon Hill, expressed her appreciation of the police officers on Stockton Boulevard. She also spoke of the problem with Asian gangs and extortion for protection. She supports the deployment plan.

Mike Hollowell, owner of bar and grill in North Sacramento, presented the committee with 200 signatures from the businesses on the "Boulevard." He is very distressed about the displacement problem that is occurring, and stated they need help and need it bad.

Sheena Wolfe, member of Tahoe Park Neighborhood Association, gave a description of her neighborhood that is surrounded by worse areas. She stated that the police officers are generally in those other areas and do not respond to calls made by citizens in her neighborhood. She feels they are loosing the battle and supports the police chief's NPO program that will add two officers to this area.

Hans Huber, lives in the downtown area, made comments regarding the effectiveness of the current NPO program. Stated that in a confined area it works well, however, in a larger area such as Mansion Flats it is not as effective because of the size. He stated that he has a problem with the calls for service in that the NPOs calls for service are not being recorded. He questioned whether the officers in his neighborhood that are funded by SHRA will be funded in the future if it is shown that there is a reduction in calls for service. He feels the issue of the calls for service needs to be examined.

Pat Shelby, member of the Ad Hoc Community Public Safety Committee, explained that this committee represents a very diverse group of community members. This committee will not fight with their

neighbors in the deployment of these officers and supports the Chief's plan. She was also concerned with long-term funding, civilianization, partnership in the communities, and a clear definition of calls for service. Ms. Shelby questioned why these series of meetings were placed into the Council's calendar of budget process and would like some guidelines as to what budgetary issues can be discussed.

Chairperson Steinberg explained that the first of a number of budget workshops had begun. During these five meetings budget line items were not going to be discussed, only those issues in the agenda that everyone received. This is part of the overall process of looking at the police department.

Bruce Booher, Chair of the Franklin Boulevard PAC and Alkali Flat Neighborhood Improvement Committee, referred to the NRPP report and stated that it laid out a number of specific items. He is not certain that this will make the improvements the neighborhoods are looking for. He believes that smaller geographic areas should be created. He also suggested keeping the number of planning meetings to a minimum, maintaining communications, following up on all items, and focusing on the youth.

Kendra Finley, member of South Land Park Association and working with the Ad Hoc Community Public Safety Committee, presented the committee with a list of suggested agenda items. As stated before, they do not have a problem with the deployment plan. She expressed a wish that the efforts that were taking place tonight had occurred before the grant deadline. She also observed that none of the maps matched and would like an accurate reflection of what is being proposed.

Councilmember Fargo and Chief Venegas explained that the large display maps were general in nature and not as specific as the maps in the packet.

Bonnie Leedy, business owner on Del Paso Boulevard, has noticed a crackdown on crime in the area. The visibility of police officers is very important to the business district. Many of the merchants are losing business because people won't come out to the boulevard.

Hazel Marie Tell, resident and homeowner in Del Paso Heights, spoke of crime and drug addiction in the neighborhood. She also supports the deployment issue.

Don Duarte, owner of a hardware store on Del Paso Boulevard, echoed the words of other business owners, and is also concerned about displacement. He stated that it is important for the merchants to stay in business and it is getting more and more difficult. He further expressed his favor of the deployment.

Philip L. Harrison, Chair of Del Paso Heights Redevelopment Advisory Committee, stated that there are currently two NPOs in his area and with the proposed deployment will receive two more. He also had questions about the maps and whether they were flawed. He is fearful that some areas that currently have NPOs may be overlooked in future deployment plans.

Chairperson Steinberg responded that the need that is out there is not being met and will not be fully met by the addition of these officers, but it is a start. He added it is not only important how far we have to go, but important how far we have come, and how much farther we can go with the program.

Norma Boge, owner of a business on Del Paso Boulevard, expressed her concern about the element in the neighborhood and sees a need for more police officers.

Donald Clark, supports this program and Chief Venegas, but would like it fine tuned. The program needs focus and coordination. He believes the NPO should be a catalyst for bringing everything together in the community - existing organizations, business, and non-business. He stated that in order for this program to work, there should be tightening of the belt in terms of oversight and accountability, and this should start with the Council. He gave an overview of some problems that

needed attention - homelessness and crack. He believes there should be neighborhood site treatment for the large crack problem in this city. He also recommended that SAC 21 recruit homeless service organizations because it has no homeless organization that deals with the homeless.

Kevin Mulderrig, Z'berg Park Neighborhood Association, spoke to Councilmember Kerth's concern with statistical data in which to deploy officers, and then gave an overview of where that data is available. He agreed with Chief Venegas' decision on the deployment plan. With regard to displacement, he expressed his belief that you need to consider whether the total crime and the total response time city-wide has been improved.

Chairperson Steinberg requested a report back as soon as possible.

John Naugle, President of Stockton Boulevard Merchant and Property Owners' Association, stated that the Stockton Boulevard representatives like what they have seen so far with the NPO program and is pleased they are being considered for a total of four. He urged that the Council adopt Chief Venegas' recommendation.

Paul Staael, member of Ad Hoc Community Public Safety Committee, member of Sons of Norway and resident and homeowner in Parker Homes, recommended coordination by the NPOs. The NPOs show enforcement and should be the ones to bind it all together and work in the community. He also suggested paring up an NPO with a CSO because the CSO does not receive respect from some members of the community.

Walter Mueller, member of Ad Hoc Community Public Safety Committee, expressed to the committee and Chief Venegas he did not feel that the NPOs who work in the larger areas were working out as well as those in smaller areas. He stated that in his neighborhood he had not seen his officers since last Christmas, and the invisibility of these officers was getting greater and greater. The bigger the area, the less impact they are going to have.

Dot Busher, member of Ad Hoc Community Public Safety Committee, agrees with the deployment recommendations. However, there is a strong feeling in District 2 that this effort is too little, too late. She also believes if the problem is understaffing, then the money should come from some place and should be the first priority of the City.

Leonard Williams, member of Ad Hoc Community Public Safety Committee and represents a CBO in District 2, requested a clear definition of the boundaries for the NPOs assigned to the neighborhood. He questioned whether or not they were confined to Strawberry Manor.

Councilmember Kerth asked for a report back on the precise boundaries. The Del Paso NPOs stay within the Del Paso Heights Redevelopment Area. Strawberry Manor is within the centroid of the housing.

Chairperson Steinberg requested a report back by next week clarifying the exact boundary.

Elmer Green, resident in the Noralto area, stated that the documentation for the calls for service was unclear. Many tenants of the apartment complexes are fearful of reporting crime because they could be evicted. This would show a lower level of calls, even though the crime is present. He discussed the problems merchants have due to panhandlers and criminals in the vicinity of their businesses. He feels that the presence of NPOs would lessen some of this activity occurring and agrees with the deployment recommendations.

Charles Butler, representing Franklin Villa area, reported that crime has decreased since the assignment of NPOs. He is before this committee on behalf of the association to state that they hope the NPOs will continue to be there.

William Snyder, stated that if there is a response to a call for service without an NPO in the area, he would take no NPO.

Cynthia Gatlin, resident of the Meadowview area, recommends that some of the NPOS be used to rid the City of narcotics. She theorizes that if the narcotics are no longer available, there will be a marked decrease in gang activity and property crimes.

Ron Javor, member of South Land Park, recommends that the Chief should be supported in his efforts to make the police force more effective and Sacramento a better place to live. But, he is not certain the deployment furthers those roles. He does not feel that having one NPO in South Land Park will make residents feel safer or enhance the quality of life. He expressed his uneasiness in the selection process and felt some of the sites were politically motivated. Mr. Javor believes that we should look at how we deal with crime problems and assign NPOs to deal with specific problems.

Bill Farrell, Revitalization Coordinator for Del Paso Boulevard, has seen the positive results of community policing surrounding the business district. He expressed concern over the displacement of crime into the surrounding areas. He thinks that how crime problems are dealt with should be considered and assign NPOs to deal with specific problems.

Kim Alexander, resident of 24th and T Street, has seen an increase in property crime during the past year. She fears that the crime problems on T Street may worsen because of assignments of NPOs adjoining the T Street area. She asked whether or not the NPOs would be limited to that particular area or will they be patrolling in her area, too.

Chief Venegas explained that with the current NPO assignments there is latitude in defining their boundaries. This latitude has been built in to address some of the displacement that will occur. Some of the areas may be enlarged while other areas will be reduced. He identified some areas that should be made in order for change to occur: 1. Residents must become more responsible. 2. Residents should be aware; know your neighbors, pay attention. 3. Consider the people who do not have the political voice to speak or organize. 4. Better coordination of information.

Alan Clarke supports the Chief in his recommendation, and in particular the Natomas/Northgate area.

Carolyn Moore, resident of Del Paso Heights, addressed the various crime problems in her neighborhood and the wish of the residents that it stop. She wondered if the police really care about poor people and stated that Del Paso Heights is comprised mostly of poor people. She stated that they really want and need the help of additional officers in this neighborhood.

Chairperson Steinberg recapped the message heard tonight: neighborhoods do not feel more entitled than another, but simply that there is a need for more resources to provide all of the public safety that each neighborhood needs and deserves. There was no talk of neighborhood vs. neighborhood. There was willingness to support the Chief's recommendation. These people are hired to give you the best recommendation they can, but there were questions by Councilmembers and the community that need more discussion and reporting.

Councilmember Kerth made a motion to ask the full Council to adopt those professional judgements. The motion included the following provisions:

1. The Committee was unable to substantiate the objectivity of the proposed assignments.
2. The Committee adopt the site selections proposed by the Chief of Police.

3. Prior to assignment or proposed assignment of additional neighborhood police officers, the Chief of Police will submit and the Council will adopt objective site criteria.
4. Complete documentation of the Federal mandate be made available to Council for review.

The motion was seconded by Councilmember Fargo. The vote was unanimous.

Chairperson Steinberg requested the following reportback: NPOs and their relationship to patrol officers and what some of the statistics are in terms of the impact on patrol.

Councilmember Fargo would like a written document explaining what the NPOs in the larger geographic areas will be required to do.

Councilmember Cohn agrees with Councilmember Fargo regarding defining the role of NPOs in larger areas. He also suggested that a link should be established between this committee and the budget process.

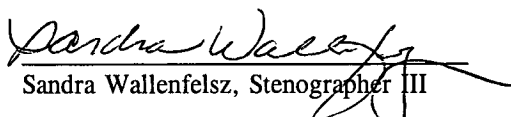
Councilmember Ortiz agrees with many of the comments made by the various neighborhoods. She asked to be permitted to play an observation role in the remaining committee hearings.

Chairperson Steinberg welcomed her to not only attend but also participate in the hearings. He stated that the recommendations will be forwarded to the full City Council for action within the next week or two.

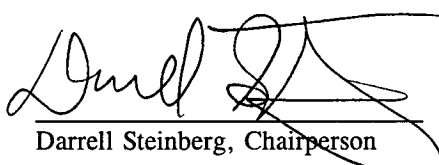
Chief Venegas advised the committee that his staff has been actively pursuing additional funds. He also stated that the guidelines had been received for COPS MORE which would allow funding for civilianization.

ADJOURNMENT - There being no further business to come before the Committee, the meeting was adjourned at 10:10 p.m.

Submitted:


Sandra Wallenfelsz, Stenographer III

Approved:


Darrell Steinberg, Chairperson